2 programs put computer on OT

If you don't think your computer has been working hard enough, now you can make it work overtime. Two new programs can keep your computer running at all hours of the day or night.

These programs monitor the built-in clock and calendar in your computer and, first, remind you of tasks to be performed; and, second, allow you to set up series of commands to be executed at particular times. You can easily use them to run time-consuming programs or print jobs, when they are least likely to disrupt your workday.

Here's a look at these two "timed-release" programs:

■ Auto-Might (The Pendulum Group Inc., 333 W. Hampden Ave., Suite 1015, Englewood 80110, $69.95) is billed as an "automatic event processor." It is designed to process a sequence of key strokes at a given time. Such keystrokes could start a communications program during cheaper phone hours or initiate a tape backup program at a set time every week. Any

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event can be repeated at set intervals. You can also use the program as a limited electronic tickler — 20 characters, maximum.

■ For a more robust electronic message display system, there is Forget-Me-Not (Sterling Castle Software, 702 Washington St., Suite 174, Marina del Rey, Calif. 90292, $79.95).

This program allows you to flash messages at designated times on your computer screen — or in the case of a network, someone else's computer screen. You can design the size and placement of the message window and the messages will appear on top of the current display. This program is, however, much more limited when it comes to running other programs automatically.

While both programs can make your computer perform specific tasks in the future, they differ vastly in their approach.

Auto-Might excels at triggering the execution of other programs — just as if you were giving commands and entering menu selections yourself. Auto-Might's one-screen menu is relatively easy to use. After filling in the times, dates and frequency for an event, you must carefully enter the exact sequence of keystrokes. But then things get a little tricky. Either you can prerecord keystrokes with a keyboard macro program like SuperKey or ProKey, or you can write them down and carefully re-enter them at the menu.

While Auto-Might is basically easy to use, Forget-Me-Not is not. The average user will likely have trouble tackling the technically written user's manual. Creating a message file means first firing up your word processor, as this program doesn't have a built-in editor. In addition to entering text, special commands must be includ-

ed for triggering the future display. Even the text itself requires a special symbol at the end of each line, as automatic word wrapping from your word processor isn't allowed.

In light of these complications, I see less value in Forget-Me-Not's ability to flash messages at predetermined times on the screen. The whole process of creating the special text files requires too much effort. Instead, if I didn't need the timed-release option, I would opt for one of the many easy-to-use memory-resident programs that prompt you with an alarm.

■ The Bottom Line. It often makes sense to have your computer run certain events unattended. Auto-Might, with its easy-to-use menu screen and ability to replay any keystrokes, is a good choice.

Hillel Segal's column includes evaluations of gadgets, seminars and books designed to enhance business productivity. Segal is a management consultant based in Boulder.